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6 NOV 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: (See Addressee List)

FROM:

[redacted]  
Director of Global Issues

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SUBJECT:

Nigeria: Transit Point for Southwest Asian  
Heroin [redacted]

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1. The attached memorandum is our first analysis on the growing problem of narcotics trafficking through Africa. The memorandum focuses on Nigeria's emerging importance as a major transit point for Southwest Asian heroin bound for markets in Europe and the United States. Seizures of heroin from Nigerian smugglers have increased dramatically since 1982, and we believe that this trend will continue. The subject of drug trafficking through Africa will be examined in more detail in later reports. [redacted]

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2. The memo was prepared by the Strategic Narcotics Branch, Terrorism/Narcotics Analysis Division, Office of Global Issues. [redacted]

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3. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Strategic Narcotics Branch, OGI, [redacted]

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Attachment:

Nigeria: Transit Point for Southwest Asian Heroin

GI M 84-10204, November 1984 [redacted]

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SUBJECT: Nigeria: Transit Point for Southwest Asian Heroin

OGI/TNAD/NAR/ [ ] (November 1984)

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- 1 - Mr. Clyde Taylor, INM, State
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- 1 - Mr. Thomas Tharp, NNBIS, Miami, Florida
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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

6 November 1984

Nigeria: Transit Point for Southwest Asian Heroin [redacted]

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Summary

Nigeria is emerging as a major transit point in the heroin trail between Southwest Asia and the United States. Expatriates from the Middle East and Southwest Asia living in Nigeria provide connections to sources of supply, and large Nigerian communities in the United States provide the link to distribution networks. Severe economic and social problems provide the incentives for Nigerians to serve as drug couriers. The military government of Nigeria is ill-equipped to deal with the heroin traffic; its drug enforcement personnel are untrained, poorly motivated, and often corrupt. We believe that Nigerian involvement in drug smuggling will grow over the next several years. Moreover, we expect Nigerian traffickers to assert more control over the heroin channels that run primarily from Pakistan through Lagos to Europe and the United States. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Terrorism/Narcotics Analysis Division, Office of Global Issues. This analysis is based on information, much of it supplied by the Drug Enforcement Administration, as of 3 November 1984. Comments and queries should be addressed to the Chief, Strategic Narcotics Branch, OGI [redacted]

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GI M 84-10204  
November 1984

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Nigeria: Transit Point for Southwest Asian Heroin [REDACTED]

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### The US Connection

Nigeria has become a major transit point for Southwest Asian heroin bound for the United States. Illicit drugs formerly smuggled into European cities--because of Nigeria's historic ties with the United Kingdom--now are headed for New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other American cities with growing Nigerian communities. The shift to the United States is apparently due to drug prices significantly higher than those in Europe. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) sources report, for example, that at least two major Nigerian smugglers who previously shipped heroin to The Netherlands shifted their operations to the United States after they found American prices more attractive. The relative strength of the US dollar also serves to draw heroin away from the closer European market. [REDACTED]

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The shift to the United States is supported by DEA data on drug seizures over the past three years. Seven heroin smuggling incidents involving Nigerians occurred in 1982, three of them in the United States and four overseas. The total amount of heroin seized in these incidents was only three kilograms (kg). In 1983, the United States arrested 21 Nigerian smugglers, other countries intercepted 15, and the amount of heroin seized rose to 30 kg. Eighty-seven heroin smuggling incidents involving Nigerians were reported through September 1984. Sixty-one of these occurred in the United States and 26 overseas, and the total amount of heroin seized increased to 46 kg. If the rates reported during the first nine months of 1984 are sustained, the number of smuggling incidents this year will rise to well over 100, three-quarters of them in the United States, and heroin seizures will increase to more than 60 kg. [REDACTED]

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### A Fertile Environment for Drug Traffickers

The impetus for Nigeria's emergence as a link in the Southwest Asian heroin trail is most likely the deterioration in trafficking conditions elsewhere, coupled with worsening socio-economic conditions at home. The Lebanese civil war, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan shut down some of the traditional trafficking routes, and the Nigerians stepped in to fill the gap. At the same time, neither the civilian nor the military governments have been able to address social and economic problems, which also encourage drug smuggling:

GI M 84-10204  
November 1984

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- Financial mismanagement has wreaked havoc on the Nigerian economy. High unemployment, inflation, and a weak currency have caused a sharp drop in living standards and fueled increases in narcotics trafficking and other illicit activities.
- Nigeria has only 90,000 police officers, not nearly enough to control routine forms of criminal activity in a society of 90 million. Nigeria's police are untrained in drug law enforcement.
- The criminal justice system in Nigeria is hampered by social disunity and the need to avoid appearing to single out certain ethnic or political groups for punishment while overlooking the crimes of others.

Widespread corruption abets drug smuggling, and lucrative arrangements between government officials and smuggling operations are not uncommon. Two DEA sources report that a Nigerian Interpol official in Lagos is taking payoffs from drug traffickers. Other Nigerian Government representatives have also been implicated in drug smuggling; a Nigerian diplomat was arrested in 1983 for smuggling heroin from Pakistan. [redacted]

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Nigeria possesses the infrastructure to develop into a large-scale drug smuggling center. Lagos is a major air hub of West Africa, and the capital serves as a transport link between opium producing regions in South and Southwest Asia and heroin markets in Europe and the United States. A large mercantile class of Pakistanis, Syrians, Lebanese, and Indians provides the necessary connections back to heroin brokers at the sources of supply. [redacted]

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At the other end of the pipeline, smugglers are able to blend easily into the large, closely knit communities of Nigerians residing in Europe and east coast US cities. The US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimates that about 40,000 Nigerians reside in the United States, many of them students whose visas have expired. Because Nigerian Government regulations prevent them from carrying enough hard currency to survive in the United States, these students often turn to low-level white collar crime as a source of income; and many are willing to serve as drug couriers to finance a trip to the United States. [redacted]

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#### Routes, Methods, and Markets

According to DEA [redacted] sources, Nigerian heroin smugglers are supplied almost exclusively by Pakistani trafficking networks. One source stated that the single dominant supplier is Ghulan Juma Khan of Peshawar. Khan is said to have a reputation for supplying high quality heroin at \$6,000 to \$8,000 per kilogram. According to the same sources, Khan also has the connections necessary to arrange for Nigerian couriers to clear

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Pakistani customs at Karachi and Islamabad without inspection. Analysis of 1984 heroin seizure data confirms that most of the Nigerian couriers return to Lagos from points in Pakistan before going on by air to New York, Boston, or other US cities. Most of the bulk heroin is divided into smaller amounts in Lagos. [REDACTED]

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Nigerian traffickers generally prefer the body-cavity method of smuggling and frequently load several couriers on board a single flight. The couriers are often women accompanied by a male controller on the same flight. An incident at JFK Airport on 26 May 1984 involved four female couriers on a Nigerian Airways flight, each carrying five ounces of heroin internally. They were accompanied by a single male courier whom they identified as their source of supply. The body-cavity method is a crude technique, and it is frequently replaced by more sophisticated methods as the trafficking network matures. The French/Corsican organizations used this method to transport heroin in the 1960s, as did the Colombians for cocaine in the 1970s, before both graduated to larger loads and more imaginative smuggling methods. [REDACTED]

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Little is known about the distribution and marketing of the Nigerian heroin once it reaches the United States. DEA sources in Philadelphia believe some of it enters the US market through connections with Black criminal organizations in the United States. [REDACTED]

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The financial arrangements for Nigerian heroin smuggling are also little known. A DEA case has implicated the African Continental Bank of Lagos in drug smuggling, and five Nigerian drug couriers have been arrested carrying checks drawn on a single account there. One of these couriers claimed that a senior staff member was the financier of the drug venture. It is also possible that the bank is being used as a source or conduit of drug financing without the knowledge of its officers. [REDACTED]

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### Outlook

The flow of heroin through Nigeria is likely to increase rapidly despite signs of increasing government concern. A decree issued in July 1984 made drug trafficking punishable by death, and in October a senior military official appeared to welcome a US suggestion that a DEA officer be stationed in Lagos. A stronger commitment by the new government is unlikely to have any effect soon. The social and economic incentives to drug traffickers are strong, and the government, faced with resource constraints, has other pressing priorities to address. Police lack the motivation, training, and equipment necessary for

successful drug interdiction, and continuing corruption will hamper police efforts. [REDACTED]

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Nigerian drug smugglers are not likely to remain content to serve as couriers for Southwest Asian organizations. Any move by the Nigerians toward greater control of the trafficking links between Southwest Asia and the United States would first require connections at the sources of supply as they attempt to cut out the expatriate middlemen who introduced them to the trade. This is a normal stage in the development of a smuggling system, and the Nigerians have almost certainly taken steps to gain tighter control over the links between Southwest Asia and the United States. [REDACTED]

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Similarly, the Nigerians would need to establish their own distribution networks in US cities. This step will evolve gradually as the Nigerians become more accepted into the US criminal community. Once these networks are created, kinship ties will make them almost impossible for police to penetrate using traditional undercover techniques. [REDACTED]

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Any success the Nigerians achieve in developing trafficking networks is likely to have an impact in other parts of Africa. Criminal elements in other African societies afflicted by economic hardships, political instability, and administrative confusion are likely to note the Nigerians' success and decide to imitate them. There is already evidence that drug traffickers from Zaire, Ghana, and Togo have entered the European drug market, and other African drug smugglers may well also look to the United States as a profitable destination for heroin and other illicit substances. [REDACTED]

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Next 12 Page(s) In Document Denied